

# **Park and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting**

**February 10, 2009**

**5:30 pm**

**Pendora Park Fieldhouse**

## **Meeting Summary**

Committee Members Present – M. Zuber, R. Epler, O. Smith, Chair – 3.

Others Present – S. Katzenmoyer, Secretary  
E. Schlegel, prospective member

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm.

## **Minutes**

Motion was made by Ruth Epler, seconded by Mike Zuber, to approve the January 13, 2009 minutes as written. Motion carried.

## **Report from Recreation Director**

Mr. Zuber reported:

- All three recreation centers are running smoothly. Attendance has increased and more than 200 meals are served daily.
- Applications are being accepted for summer playground leaders. He informed the Committee that budget cuts may mean that playgrounds in close proximity may be regionalized with one leader. Mr. Zuber felt this would be a good move to bring more children together for activities.
- Park Security has been eliminated due to budget cuts. Mr. Zuber feels this was an acceptable place to cut the budget as it does not affect the City's youth. He also noted the many thanks he and his staff get from parents because of their happiness with the City's programs.
- Renovations at Hillside are complete.
- Renovations at Baer Park are underway. Weather may cause some delays in the project but it should be complete well before the start of the summer program.
- Essick and 3<sup>rd</sup> & Spring playgrounds are in the design phase.
- Northmont playground will be renovated using CDBG and DCNR funds.

Ms. Epler questioned the City Park playground. Mr. Zuber stated that the playground area is complete. Ms. Katzenmoyer noted that Public Works is evaluating firms to design improvements to the bandshell, pond and spectator area. She noted that 25 responses were received as many firms are looking for work in the recessed economy. Evaluating 25 firms will take quite a bit of time.

Mr. Schlegel questioned where the food for the meals is procured. Mr. Zuber explained that the bulk of the food is donated by the Greater Reading Food Bank. Any food which needs to be purchased is supplemented by staff and is paid for through fundraising efforts.

### **Old Business**

- Review of park evaluations/10 year Park and Open Space Plan – Ms. Katzenmoyer noted the need to begin working on updating the 10 year Park and Open Space Plan. The current plan expires in 2012. She noted that the entire plan is available on the City's website. Mr. Schlegel referenced the County's Plan and stated that the City does not have enough open space according to the County's calculations of acreage per citizen. He also noted the need for increasing opportunities for adult sports.

### **New Business**

- Past Activities – Ms. Epler noted that many activities were done at individual playgrounds depending on the skills/talents of the playground leader but some were at every playground (pet show, talent show). She stated that the lantern parade was for all playgrounds. Each playground created a float, costumes and lanterns and the parade was held at City Park as a grand finale for the summer playground season. Mr. Zuber stated that as playgrounds may be regionalized, the participation may be smaller. Mr. Smith suggested that this be approached on a smaller scale for this coming summer to get started. Ms. Epler suggested having playgrounds in each quadrant participate with one another. Mr. Zuber will prepare the playgrounds in each quadrant for the next meeting. Mr. Smith also requested a timeline for this project. Mr. Zuber suggested that Heather Boyer attend the next meeting as she works directly with the summer program.
- Sports Programs – Mr. Schlegel questioned if there was a tee ball program in Reading. Mr. Smith stated that there was but only through the local athletic associations. He stated the lack of youth volleyball programs in the City. Mr. Schlegel suggested adding these sports to the summer program and having an end of summer tournament competition between playgrounds. Mr. Zuber described the success of the indoor adult volleyball program. The Committee felt that the area above the skateboard park would be a good location to install several volleyball courts.
- Park Rangers – Mr. Schlegel noted the importance of the perception of safety at parks and playgrounds. He stated that more people will use the facilities if they feel a higher level of safety. Mr. Zuber stated that the park security program has been eliminated. However, he stated that the reports of past security officers show no incidents. Mr. Smith stated that there is a misconception of unsafe conditions in the City.

- Dog Park – Ms. Epler questioned if the plan for a dog park in City Park was moving forward. Ms. Katzenmoyer will research the City Park Master Plan and report back at the next meeting. Mr. Schlegel stated it may be good to have two or three dog parks in different areas of the City.
- Jogging trails - Mr. Zuber stated his belief that the City should also have jogging trails. Ms. Epler stated that the trail from Pendora through Mineral Spring Park and up to Egelman's would be a good jogging trail. She stated that with some lighting installed and better maintenance of the trail this would be an excellent location. Mr. Zuber noted his frustration in feeling the need to begin rehabilitating playgrounds which were done in the recent past because of vandalism. He noted his hope that the Department could begin focusing on new programs and facilities. Mr. Zuber described some of his ideas for use of Mineral Spring Park (gazebos and pavilions large enough for wedding ceremonies) and described this park as a "diamond in the rough."

## **Initiatives**

- Recreation Opportunities

Ms. Epler stated her belief that tables with checkerboards need to be installed at additional locations. She stated her hope that several could be installed in Pendora Park in the area of the former stage. She noted her frustration that many youth remain indoors during the summer months. Mr. Smith stated his idea of a video game tournament to draw those indoor children out and to the recreation facilities.

Ms. Epler stated her idea of an adult exercise program. There was discussion of holding these exercise sessions outdoors during warm months. Mr. Smith suggested working in coordination with the YMCA on a program. Ms. Epler also suggested expanding the exercise station concept that is available at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Spruce.

A discussion was held concerning fees for adult programs and some youth programs. Mr. Schlegel stated his belief that one long-term goal of recreation should be that it is self sustaining. The fees would be minimal to allow participation.

Mr. Smith stated his belief that culturally, people from Berks County living outside the City will not come into the City. He stated their fears of getting shot and being attacked by thugs. Mr. Schlegel stated that much work needs to be done to change the local culture and to show youth ways to be involved without gangs and violence.

There was discussion of the recent newspaper article regarding the County requesting assistance with several recreation areas from local municipalities and athletic associations.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

The next meeting of the PARC will be held on Tuesday, March 17 at 5:30 pm at Pendora Park Fieldhouse.

*Respectfully submitted*

*Shelly Katzenmoyer,  
Deputy City Clerk*